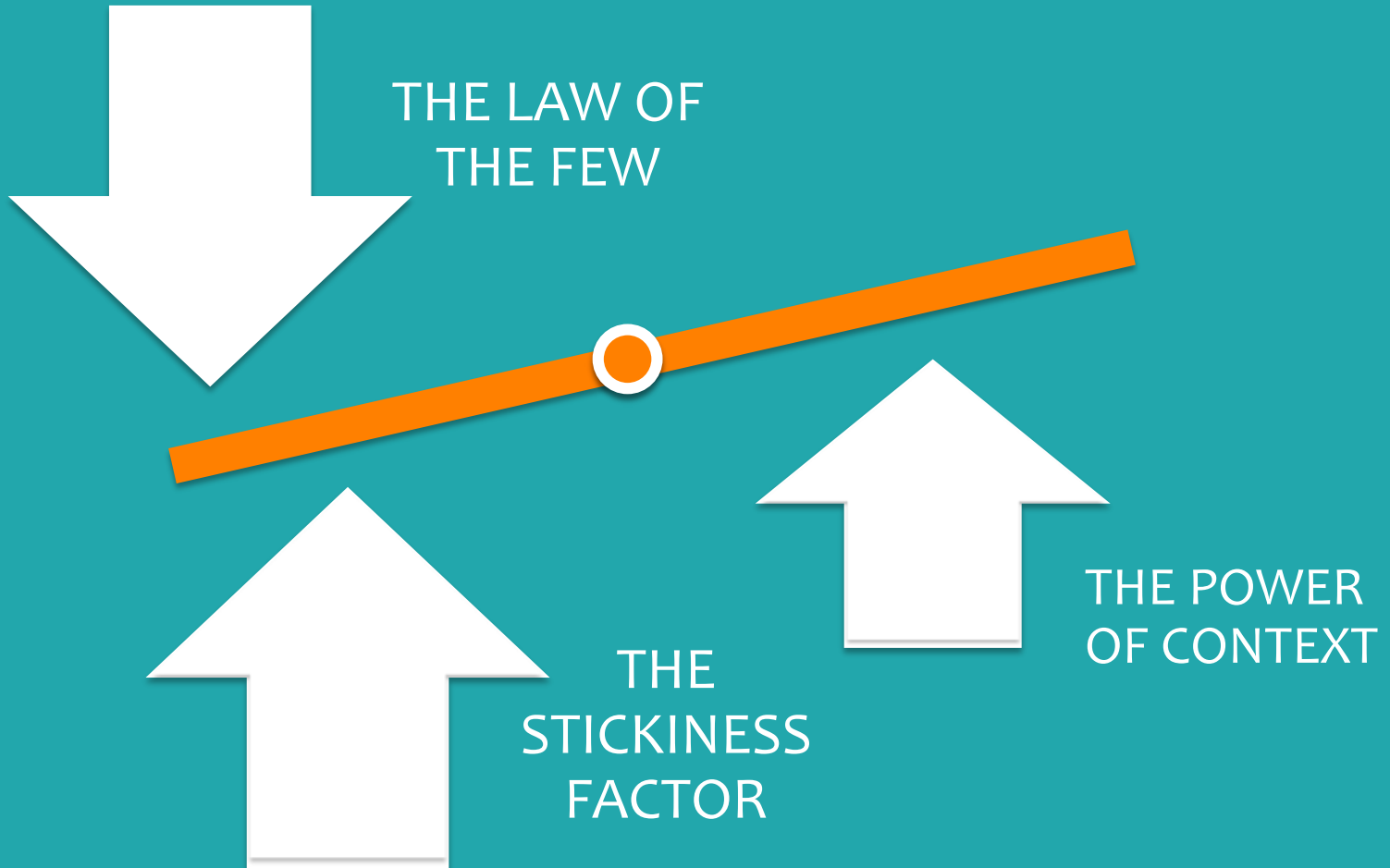


RPL IMPLEMENTATION IN ESTONIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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TIPPING POINT



Top-Down

HE sector led

Legislation

Borrowed
practices

NO to access

Funding?

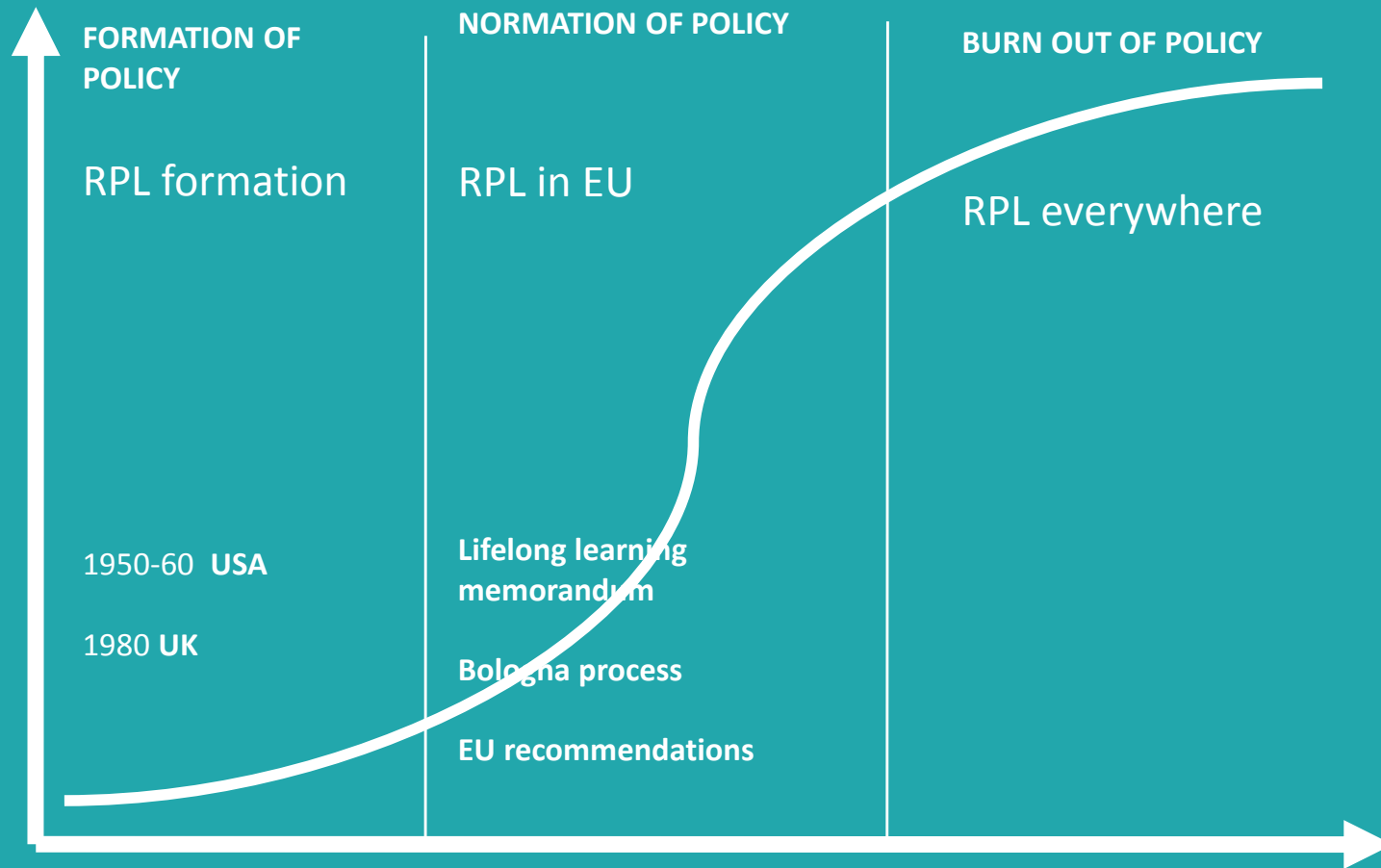
Project based
developments

RPL in Estonian HE

TOP – DOWN PROCESS

- EU policy as a driving force in RPL development;
- RPL aimed at labor market needs and educational mobility;
- HE institutions did not feel the need for RPL;
- Policy and legislation;
- ESF funding.
- RPL implementation is university led and thus is concerned with quality assurance issues and fitting the RPL to the existing systems;
- Learning and learners as central for RPL process are not present in implementation.

POLICY BORROWING AND LENDING



PROJECT BASED DEVELOPMENTS

- 2003 - 2007 LÜKKA project framework (ESF)
- 2008 – 2013 Primus programme (ESF), 1,8 million EUR
- A number of smaller initiatives funded by Erasmus+ (Gruntvig, Leonardo), Nordplus

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- A **network** uniting HEI;
- Accurate and reliable **statistics** on RPL assessments and counselling;
- **Common RPL principles** and quality criteria.
- A **manual** to assist institutions on implementing the principles of RPL.
- Various **e-solutions**, including electronic RPL application forms compatible with study information systems.
- **Training sessions** and seminars for RPL practitioners, and compiling the necessary guidelines and information materials to improve the assessment and counselling quality.
- Distribution of **information** about RPL among students, potential applicants and society in general.

During the period of 2008-2012, 973 people participated in RPL assessor trainings, 242 in RPL counselor trainings, 4,438 people participated in various seminars on issues of RPL, 1,109 applicants participated in self-analysis training courses and 4,843 people participated in various information seminars, open-day courses, one-time events, etc.

RPL PRINCIPLES

- RPL is goal-oriented.
- RPL is based on the needs of the applicant and is voluntary for the applicant.
- The organisation and methods of RPL are reliable and based on the standards of
- education, professional standards and good practices. Trust plays a central role and results from social recognition, precisely defined standards and clear information on the process and criteria of assessment.

- The assessors and advisers are competent, independent and impartial. Independence and impartiality are key factors in the assessment process and are based on the responsibility of assessors. The roles of assessors and advisers are clear and separate.
- RPL assessment follows precise and unambiguous assessment principles.
- The quality assurance process of RPL is systematic and based on the principle of continuous improvement.

External evaluation (2012 and 2013)

- The aim was to assess the implementation of RPL process in institutions. It was funded by the ESF programme Primus and was carried out twice.
- Institutions interested in evaluation signed up for it and initially carried out a **self-assessment**.
- A team of **external evaluators** visited the institutions and carried out interviews and desk research.
- The recommendations made to the institution were not mandatory and the external evaluation was seen as a learning process.

TULE – Resumption of interrupted education in higher education

- The target group is individuals who have not finished their undergraduate or masters degrees between 2003-2009.
- People who have completed at least 50% of their studies are eligible to take part in order to complete their studies.

The programme was free of charge for the participants. The available budget was EUR 4.8 million.

PROJECT BASED DEVELOPMENTS

- Common understanding of RPL;
- Extensive funding and attention to the RPL topic;
- All HEI working together for a common goal.
- Fragmented developments, that are suitable for project/program aims;
- Sustainability;
- What happens after the project finishes?

LEGISLATION

- RPL is regulated in the *University Act* and *Higher Education Standard*
- **2003** *University Act* allowed up to 50 % of HE programmes to be obtained through RPL.
- Since **2007** there has been no limitation but it is stated that HEIs cannot award whole diplomas or certificates on the basis of prior and experiential learning. In practice, this means that the whole of the curriculum may be recognised on the basis of prior learning, except for the thesis or final examination.
- *Higher Education Standard* is stating that all HEI need to have RPL regulations in place.

NO ENTRY

- RPL in HE can not be used to fulfill all the access requirements;
- Various restrictions and limitations on RPL implementations set by institutions.

RPL APPLICANTS

TYPICAL

- Advantaged groups
- Knows well formal education system and its opportunities
- Interested in saving time
- Maximum use of prior studies
- They want more of RPL!

UNUSUAL

- Marginalized groups
- Has work experience
- Has studied in numerous ways but...
- Unfamiliar with university
- Values learning and opportunity to study
- How can they be supported?

70% of students are aware of RPL

83% have never applied for RPL

13% have applied for recognition of prior studies

less than 2% have applied for recognition of
experiential learning

(Tallinn University 2012-2016)

RPL PRACTITIONERS

Guidance

- **Advisers** are typically administrators eg study coordinators with in institutes/faculties;
- **Adviders** see RPL councelling as a difficult part of their everyday work.
 - Applicants are not aware of the RPL process nor their own learning
 - Lack of skills for supporting applicants and understanding their prior learning

Assessors

- **Assessors** are typically academic staff eg professors, lecturers;
- **Assessors** see applicants problematic.
 - Applicants have lack of knowledge about the curriculum, their own knowledge, reflective writing is poor and supportive documents are often not enough

LESSONS LEARNED

- Systematic approach that includes all sectors;
- Coordination and funding of RPL implementation;
- Avoid fragmentation;
- Information about RPL and on the use of RPL (statistics);
- Moving past restrictions;
- RPL becoming a normal part of study process!

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

- **Social justice**
 - Individual opportunities, widening access to education
- **Social change**
 - Making the competence of the population visible
- **Economic development and labor market**
 - Using existing competencies more effectively

RPL ADAPTED TO THE SYSTEM

- Focuses on the demands of the educational system or the labor market
- Individuals competencies are measured and assessed according to the prescribed criteria that determine which specific competence and knowledge are useful
- Knowledge and competencies are regarded as products or goods
- the individuals whose competence satisfies formal demands are the only group that can take advantage of this kind of RPL

RPL CHANGING THE SYSTEM

- All knowledge is valuable in itself and therefore the individual's knowledge and competence could be accepted, even if the formal merits are lacking
- Untraditional groups enter the system as a result of RPL. These groups gain access to the system not just because their competence meets the demands of the system but because the system recognizes the individuals' experience and competence on their own merits
- The individuals enter the system with their knowledge, experiences and perspectives, they are able to bring about changes in the system from inside.

*The beautiful thing about
learning is that no one can
take it away from you.*

- BB King